

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 8978

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, MPOL, MMOL, MASS, AU
SUBJ: MEETING WITH DEFENSE MINISTER ROESCH

1. IN COURSE OF INTRODUCTORY CALL ON OCTOBER 3, DEFENSE
MINISTER ROESCH GAVE ME SUMMARY REVIEW OF STATUS OF GOA EFFORT
TO REORGANIZE AND UPDATE MILITARY DEFENSE POSTURE OF AUSTRIA,
AN UNDERTAKING WHICH HE TERMED CONTINUING, LONG-TERM PROCESS.
ACCORDINGLY, ROESCH SAID HE HAD ALREADY TAKEN DECISION TO
POSTPONE POSSIBLE PURCHASE OF NEW TANKS UNTIL SPRING OF 1978
AND OF NEW INTERCEPTOR AIRCRAFT UNTIL EARLY 1980'S. ROESCH
ADDED THAT IN INTERIM, GOA WOULD CONCENTRATE ON UPDATING
BASICS FOR TROOPS (BARRACKS, EQUIPMENT, SMALL ARMS, ETC.)
AND ON DEVELOPING GROUND INFRASTRUCTURE (RADAR CONTROL AND
SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM) FOR LATER DEPLOYMENT OF AIRCRAFT.

2. IN RESPONSE TO MY QUERY, ROESCH STATED THAT
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DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SWISS MILITARY DEFENSE EFFORT (BIGGER
BUDGET, MORE POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD MILITARY SERVICE,
ETC.) AND THAT OF AUSTRIA IS REFLECTION OF HISTORY AND
GEOGRAPHY OF TWO STATES. IN CONTRAST TO SWITZERLAND,
AUSTRIA HAS EITHER BEEN ON LOSING SIDE OR SUFFERED MAJOR
PHYSICAL DAMAGE IN ALL MILITARY HOSTILITIES INVOLVING
AUSTRIA SINCE 1815. THEREFORE, FIRST CONCERN OF GOA HAS

BEEN REBUILDING OF ECONOMY AND LIVES OF CITIZENRY, AS OPPOSED TO EMPHASIS ON DEFENSE CAPABILITY OF STATE. REPEATED DEFEATS HAVE ALSO LEFT PSYCHIC IMPRINT ON POPULATION IN FORM OF CERTAIN FATALISM REGARDING VIABILITY OF ANY MILITARY DEFENSE BY SMALL COUNTRY IN KEY STRATEGIC AREA ASTRIDE MAJOR EAST-WEST INVASION ROUTES. ROESCH NOTED IN PHILOSOPHICAL VEIN THAT IMAGE OF AUSTRIAN MILITARY HAS IMPROVED IN RECENT YEARS AND THAT CONTINUATION OF SUCH A TREND MIGHT RESULT IN GREATER PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR INCREASED DEFENSE OUTLAYS IN FUTURE. (ROESCH, OF COURSE, DID NOT NOTE THAT SOCIALIST PARTY'S STRONG ANTIPATHY IN LATE 1960'S TO MILITARY SERVICES, A HERITAGE OF AUSTRO-MARXISM, HAD CONTRIBUTED TO PROBLEM OF NEGATIVE IMAGE OF MILITARY AND POPULAR ATTITUDES ON DEFENSE. ALSO LEFT UNMENTIONED WAS FACT THAT CURRENT DIFFICULT BUDGET SITUATION OF GOA MAKES UNLIKELY ANY INCREASED EXPENDITURES FOR DEFENSE IN NEXT FEW YEARS.

3. IN DISCUSSING VARIOUS POSSIBLE MILITARY SCENARIOS FACING AUSTRIA FROM EAST, ROESCH VOLUNTEERED THAT GOA HAS IMPRESSION THAT YUGOSLAV LEADERSHIP HAS CONSOLIDATED DOMESTIC POLITICAL MILITARY SITUATION AND THAT TRANSITION TO POST-TITO ERA SHOULD TAKE PLACE WITHOUT ANY MAJOR INTERNAL DISTURBANCES. ACCORDING TO ROESCH, POST-TITO YUGOSLAVIA WILL IN ALL PROBABILITY WORK TO MAINTAIN YUGOSLAVIA'S NON-ALIGNED STATUS AND SEPARATENESS FROM SOVIET UNION IN FORM OF ITS OWN SELF-MANAGEMENT
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COMMUNISM. GOA THEREFORE DOES NOT ANTICIPATE ANY MAJOR SHIFTS IN YUGOSLAV POLICY ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT. WOLF

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